

ASSOCIATED PRESS
5 March 1984

WASHINGTON
COURT AGREES TO DECIDE WHETHER CIA CAN BE FORCED TO REVEAL
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The Supreme Court today agreed to decide whether the Central Intelligence Agency may be forced in some cases to reveal its intelligence sources.

The justices will hear the government's appeal from a ruling that could force the CIA to disclose the names of researchers who took part in a program involving brainwashing and experimental drugs.

The U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals here ruled last June 10 that the CIA may not refuse automatically to disclose the names of researchers involved in MKULTRA _ the code name for the program.

Some individuals were unwittingly administered LSD and other drugs in the research program during the 1950s and 1960s, and at least two people died because of the experiments.

A congressional committee and a presidential commission investigated MKULTRA in the mid-1970s, shedding light on numerous alleged abuses.

In the case acted on today, the Ralph Nader group Public Citizen sought under the Freedom of Information Act the names of individual researchers and institutions used by the CIA to conduct the experiments.

The CIA contends that it promised confidentiality to the researchers, and that forcing the agency to reveal their names may threaten other intelligence sources.

"The possibility of such a disclosure alone can have extremely damaging effects, because it gives rise to the perception that the CIA cannot be trusted to keep a source's identity secret," Justice Department lawyers said.

They added: "A foreign government that learned the sources that the agency was consulting would have been able to infer both the general nature of the CIA's project and the directions that its research was taking."

The appeals court here ruled that in most operations the CIA will not be forced to reveal the names of intelligence sources.

But, the appeals court said, the CIA may not withhold the names automatically "in cases like (MKULTRA) where a great deal of the information is not self-evidently sensitive, where the reasons why its sources would desire confidentiality are not obvious, and where the agency's desire for secrecy seems to derive principally from fear of a public outcry resulting from revelation of the details of its past conduct."

A great deal of the CIA's records of MKULTRA were destroyed in 1973 on orders from then- CIA Director Richard Helms.

But in 1977 the agency located about 8,000 pages of previously undisclosed material. At the direction of Stansfield Turner, then CIA director, the documents were turned over to a Senate subcommittee but the names of participating researchers and institutions were not made public.

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